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ABSTRACT

Contents of this keynote address provide current information about services offered by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families (ACYF). In fiscal years 1984 and 1985, ACYF will continue with program initiatives to improve the quality and effectiveness of Head Start. In addition, ACYF has established a number of initiatives to help support American families in their child care needs. ACYF also continues to be involved in helping states and local communities improve their child care systems and services. To counter child abuse and neglect, ACYF assists states and communities in improving their prevention and treatment activities. Additionally, the organization has implemented a special-needs adoption program and administers a program under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Throughout the past decade, considerable progress has been made in every aspect of children's services. In the future, while the federal government will continue to provide support, leadership at the community and the state levels will be needed. (RH)

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN THE 80's

WHAT ARE THEY? HOW CAN THEY BE MET?

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Keynote Address

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CHILDREN'S SERVICES IN THE 80's: WHAT ARE THEY? HOW CAN THEY BE MET?

Greetings

Thank you for inviting me to speak at this important regional conference of the New England Association for the Education of Young Children.

I am especially pleased to be here because we share a common focus and concern -- a concern for children and families across our nation to have opportunities to reach - to aspire for success and to be successful.

We share a concern for the vitality and cohesiveness of the family; we share a committment for helping children and families to be all that they can be.

We deeply believe and pay service to the fundamental truth that this nation's children and youth are our most valued resource -- the leaders of tomorrow and the ones who will carry on the heritage of the family, the community and the nation. Certainly this valued resource becomes even more valuable as we build the potential for life success.

As Acting Commissioner of the Administration for Children, Youth and Families, I oversee programs which extend to all children from birth through adolescence with particular emphasis on the needs of children who are at risk because they have special needs--needs which are known to be deterrents or inhibitors toward success: Children in poverty; children in need of foster care, adoption or other child welfare services; handicapped children; abused and neglected children; runaway youth; and children from minority cultures such as the Hispanic, Native American, Asian or special populations such as our migrant families.

ACYF policies and programs reflect the recognition that the development of children is a continuous process, that the needs of families are multiple and often interrelated, and that a variety of services and supportive assistance is sometimes required in order to promote healthy family development and stability

Many of you are familiar with the Administration for Children, Youth and Families and its various programs. I'd like to bring you up to date on developments in children's services for the eighties and describe some new ways in which our children's needs are being met.

HEAD START

- Head Start was one of the "Safety Net" programs identified by President Reagan.

- The primary purpose of the Head Start program continues to be to provide comprehensive developmental services to improve the quality of life for low-income preschool children and their families. Head Start emphasizes cognitive and language skills, socioemotional, physical and mental development, and parent involvement to enable each child to develop and function at his or her highest potential.

- Head Start children also receive comprehensive health services, including immunizations, physical and dental exams, and treatment, as well as hot meals to help meet their daily nutritional needs.

- Since January 1966 when I started working for Head Start, I have been continually impressed by the dedication, the hard work and the love that so many people contribute to this program. Head Start is a labor of love and commitment for more than 70,000 staff in local programs and for hundreds of thousands of parent and community volunteers. These are the people that make Head Start work and that make it a unique program for children.

- Although Head Start has accomplished a great deal since its inception, we are continually seeking ways to make it better.

- As of this September, Head Start will be a billion dollar business. This year $74 million was appropriated to expand the program which will increase our enrollment by 37-40,000 children and provide for more innovation in program development.

- Between 1980 and the end of 1984, the number of chidren served by Head Start will have increased by more than 63,000 children, rising from an enrollment of 376,000 children in 1980 to an estimated enrollment of 440,000 in 1984.

- The impact of the Head Start program on preschool children of low-income families has made a substantial contribution in providing equal opportunities, particularly to minority children and children with special needs.

  -- Sixty-seven percent of Head Start's enrollment consists of Black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American children.

  -- Twelve percent of all children served are professionally diagnosed as handicapped.

  -- Twenty percent are Hispanic whose cultural and language characteristics call for special program activities.

-- Three percent are from migrant farmworker families.

- Head Start programs have been successful in making use of non-Head Start resources in their communities for the benefit of Head Start children and their families. For example, through a formal interagency agreement with ACTION, 60 foster Grandparents and Retired Senior Volunteers are assisting in the Head Start programs and an additional 3200 youth volunteers are assisting children and families in Head Start and day care programs. Parents also volunteer in Head Start. For every four children enrolled, at least three parents are providing volunteer services.

In FY 1984 and 1985, ACYF will continue with program initiatives to improve the quality and effectiveness of Head Start.

- A management initiative to analyze costs and improve the efficiency of programs, which became operational this year, will continue to produce savings in the future. These savings will be used to increase quality or enrollment.

- There will be continued emphasis on enrolling children with handicaps, including those with severe or multiple handicaps.

- A number of demonstration and evaluation projects will also be continued. Measures, Synthesis, Telecommunications, Longitudinal Studies. These projects are intended to develop and test strategies for increasing self-sufficiency among Head Start families and commuities and for improving Head Start services. The ultimate goal of this effort is to develop and transfer effective technologies to the local Head Start and child care communities.

- In order to assure that local projects are equipped to deal with the special developmental needs of handicapped children, a network of Resource Access Projects (RAPs) will continue to provide special training and technical assistance to the local grantees.

- Training and technical assistance will also be directed toward helping Head Start grantees meet program performance standards in education, social services, parent involvement, and health services.

- In addition, Head Start will explore ways to further involve state governments in continuing the gains made by Head Start children as they enter the public school systems.

CHILD CARE

In addition to Head Start, I want to talk about some of the other efforts that ACYF is making to enhance the well being of American children and families.

One of the services which impacts on a rapidly growing number of families is child care.

The social context for children's services is changing rapidly as the traditional balance between work and family life is being realigned. Family roles are changing and, often, family stresses are increasing. Working families frequently experience great difficulty in arranging for child care which meets their own and their children's needs.

We see that mothers of young children are surging into the work force. This is true regardless of marital status, age of children or ethnic background. It is true of the poor as well as the middle class and occurs in all parts of the country.

- The dual career family has become the dominant mode, with 62 percent of two parent families now in this category. Labor force participation of mothers is even greater when the father's income is low.

- Over the past decade, the number of single parent families -- most of them headed by working mothers -- has doubled to 6.6 million or about 22 percent of all families nationally.

- Half of the single, female-headed households in America are in poverty. Needless to say, these single parents are disproportionately represented in the labor force and are disproportionately in need of affordable, good quality care arrangements for their children.

- Not only are there more women with young children working today, but they are entering or returning to the labor force earlier after the birth of a child.

  -- Almost half of the mothers with a child under three are now in the labor force.

  -- Among women with a child under one year, nearly a third of married women and 40 percent of single mothers are working.

- The demographic trends reflecting women in the workplace are expected to continue through the end of the century with the greatest growth in labor force participation most likely to occur among mothers with children under three.

-- The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the number of preschool children with both parents in the labor force will inrease by over 2 million children or 36 percent by 1990.

-- Children of single working parents will increase by over a million or 57% by that time.

Promoting the accessibility and quality of child care at a reasonable cost represents an important strategy for enhancing family well being, for promoting safe, healthy child development, and for improving the status of women.

The Administration for Children, Youth and Families has established a number of initiatives to help support American families in their child care needs.

o Employer supported child care is a major administration priority, and an area which is growing rapidly. There are now over a thousand employers with child care programs, up from about a hundred in 1978 and 415 in 1982. ACYF has been playing a facilitative role through a number of activities.

-- We are collaborating with the White House Office of Private Sector Initiatives to encourage corporate involvement in child care through forums for Chief Executive Officers of major corporations. To date, 16 of these forums have been held in cities around the country. As a result, many communities are conducting follow up activities to enhance the active participation of the business community and more business leaders are considering child care for their own firms.

-- We have recently completed a National Employer Supported Child Care Project which details what employers around the country are doing, benefits of child care for the employer, the range of available options, and how they can be implemented. Results of this project, based on the actual experiences of 415 employers from all sectors of the economy, have just been published by Auburn House Publishing Company in Boston.

-- We are also conducting extensive research. The Portland State University has surveyed over 8,000 employees and 33 companies to help enrich our understanding of how child care variables are related to work place problems such as absenteeism and job stress. This project is also developing a computerized child care information and referral system and is pioneering a new "Community Shares" concept in which area employers are helping to underwrite the larger I&R system as well as purchase specialized services for their own employees.

- ACYF is also supporting a number of discretionary projects, including one of the first employer supported family day care systems for infants in the Dallas area. We anticipate funding additional employer supported child care projects through the HDS Coordinated Discretionary Funding Program this fiscal year.

One of the probable outcomes of the social changes in our country will be the emergence of integrated child care systems which are tailored to the needs of individual communities. State of Georgia for example.

- As part of the Head Start Expansion this year, ACYF will be funding a number of innovative approaches to the linkage of Head Start and day care including satellite family day care systems which will expand the opportunities for working Head Start parents as well as contribute to the formulation of community systems.

Another major area in which ACYF continues to be involved is assisting States and local communities to improve their child care systems and services.

- The HDS Coordinated Discretionary Funding Program contained several priority areas related to child care this year. We expect to fund research and demonstration projects in <u>infant/toddler care</u>, <u>latch key children and school age care</u>. Particular emphasis is placed on <u>flexible response systems</u> which increase the options for working families.

- One of the most crucial needs of parents and providers in the 80's is that for sound, easily obtainable information. In the coming year, ACYF will produce a "Child Care Rainbow Series" of manuals to update information needed to improve the availability, accessibility and affordability of child care options in our local communities.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Another area of concern nationally is that of child abuse and neglect. This month, as many of you know, has been designated National Child Abuse Prevention Month which was launched from the Great Hall of the Hubert Humphrey building on April 2.

- The aim of this event is to focus public attention on the problem and to highlight the message that everyone has a role to play in preventing child abuse and neglect.

- The National Public Radio (NPR) is producing seven half-hour programs entitled "Children at Risk" and 52 five minute modules on different aspects of child abuse and neglect. The first of the seven part series, "Through the Eyes of the Child" was distributed to all NPR stations the first week of April to coincide with Child Abuse Prevention Month.

- A special edition of Children Today which focuses on child abuse and neglect will be released this month.

Over the past ten years, since the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act was signed into law, the Federal government has played a significant role in serving as a catalyst to mobilize society's social service, mental health, medical, educational, legal and law enforcement resources to address the challenges of child abuse and neglect.

- Since that time, many professionals, volunteers and citizen advocates have become aware that child maltreatment is more than isolated instances of children suffering and families in chaos. It is a problem that afflicts the health of the nation as a whole, with both economic and social costs.

- The issues raised by child abuse and neglect cut across social, geographic, ethnic and economic boundaries.

- We estimate that in 1982, as many as 1.4 million children were reported victims of child abuse or neglect. Approximately two-fifths of the reports received by State agencies in 1982 were substantiated. While the rate of increase is diminishing, the number of children known to be abused or seriously neglected is nevertheless increasing.

- Our program is not a service program but a program to assist states and communities in improving their prevention and treatment activities. Forty-nine of the 57 states and territories receive funds from our National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect. A major purpose of the State grant program is to support start-up activities which, if proven successful, will be continued by the State with other funds. Most exciting to us is the exchange of information among the States about successful projects and effective approaches.

- One of the basic strengths of the National Center is its capacity for dissemination. Our national clearinghouse serves as a comprehensive resource for service providers, public and private agencies researchers, the Congress and members of the general public.

- Over the years we have come increasingly to stress prevention and help for abused and neglected children within their own families rather than through foster care. At the present time only about 15 percent of these children are in the foster care system.

FOSTER CARE

- In addition to child abuse and neglect, family discord, inadequate housing and income, and absence of a parent -- through hospitalization, incarceration or abandonment -- account for about 70 percent of all children entering foster care. Child related reasons account for about 20 percent of children separated from their families.

- In 1977, approximately half a million children were in foster care. As a result of considerable effort, this number is believed to have decreased to approximately 350,000 children. The number seems to be declining at a rate of about 5 percent a year.

- Between 40 and 60 percent of the children are reunited with their parents. The median stay for children in foster care is approximately 19 months. However, almost 20 percent of the children leave and reenter the system.

Although foster care serves a crucial need for some children, we don't need empirical evidence to be convinced that a warm, loving, nurturing and stable family environment is best for children. We must all ask ourselves what we can do to help.

One of the ways that ACYF is helping is through special needs adoption.

SPECIAL NEEDS ADOPTION

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment and Adoption Reform Act (PL 95-266) mandates activities to facilitate the elimination of barriers to adoption, particularly for children with special needs.

- We have made considerable progress in the development and expansion of a national adoption information exchange which went into operation last year. Today there are 39 local exhanges, 46 state exchanges and 11 regional exchanges. These exchanges facilitate the adoption of hard to place children including large sibling groups, older adolescents and children with severe handicaps.

- We have also developed a national child welfare reporting system using data gathered by the States.

- A Model State Adoption Act for Special Needs Children for use by the States has been completed and widely disseminated.

- We have also developed information, training, and education materials on adoption of special needs children. A 50 hour curriculum for adoption workers has been completed and hundreds of individuals have now been trained. Potential adoptive families are also being trained for their parental roles with special needs children.

- Recently, we have focused on the needs of minority children and families. We have shown again and again that Black, Hispanic and Indian families are eager to adopt minority children, if placement agencies make the special efforts necessary to reach out to them and to help them through the system.

- Across the country local television stations are also promoting awareness of special needs children and adoption opportunities through public service announcements which describe a locally adoptable child.

As a result of the efforts of thousands of interested people across the country, working through agencies, minority organizations, adoptive parent groups, funded projects and other vehicles, considerable progress has been made in helping children with special needs to find loving families. The basic notions that all children are adoptable and that there is a family somewhere for each waiting child, no matter how complex his or her needs, are now commonly accepted by most people involved in adoptions.

RUNAWAY AND HOMELESS YOUTH

A final program administered by the Administration for Children, Youth and Families is the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. This Act provides support to community-based programs, located outside of the law enforcement and the juvenile justice systems, for the provision of temporary shelter, counseling and aftercare services for runaway and homeless youth and their families. These services are designed to reunite youth with their families or, if this is not possible, to place youth in appropriate alternative living arrangements. Additionally, the Act provides support to the National Runaway Switchboard, a 24-hour, toll free telephone service, which serves as a neutral channel of communication between runaway youth and their parents as well as a source of referral to needed services located in the callers' communities.

o The problem of runaway and homeless youth is a serious and persistent one.

-- A survey conducted in 1975 found that approximately 733,000 youth between the ages of ten and 17 leave home annually without the permission of their parents or legal guardian at least overnight. Youth service providers and others who come into contact with runaway youth maintain that the problem is increasing, and estimate currently that over one million youth are leaving home annually.

-- Valid data are currently not available regarding the number of homeless youth nationally, but the estimates of service providers range as high as 500,000 annually.

o Left on their own, both runaway and homeless youth are susceptible to exploitation and to other dangers. Moreover, they lack the counseling and other assistance that is required to understand and to work through the problems which caused them to leave home.

o Currently, 228 centers, located in the 50 States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Guam, are receiving support under the Act. In FY 1983 these centers provided ongoing crisis intervention and shelter services to approximately 50,000 young people. The parents and other family members of many of these youth were involved in family counseling and other sources. Another 150,000 youth received one-time counseling or referral services from the centers on a "drop-in" basis or over the telephone. Approximately half of the youth who received ongoing services were reunited with their families. For other youth, such reunification was not possible due to reasons such as the lack of stable home or the persistance of problems such as abuse. Forty-two percent of the youth were placed in stable living situations such as friends', group or relatives' homes, boarding schools and other arrangements.

- During the same period, the National Runaway Switchboard provided referral and crisis intervention services to approximately 200,000 runaway and homeless youth and their families.

A problem closely related to that of runaway and homeless youth is the one of missing children. Many youth who leave home and who do not contact their families are classified as "missing." Others are children who are abducted by strangers annually.

- As you are probably aware, the Department of Justice, through its Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, recently awarded a grant to establish the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. This center will seek to provide public awareness about the problem and will serve as a resource for information on how communities and parents can address the problem through such methods as finger-printing their children and establishing support groups of parents who have experienced an abduction of their child.

CONCLUSION

I would like to leave you with an encouraging word and a sobering thought. Throughout the past decade, considerable progress has been made in every aspect of children's services. Yet clearly much, much more needs to be accomplished. We must serve more children, and we must serve them well.

We have learned that with all children's services, what is needed is a multifaceted effort and the strong commitment of many individuals and organizations. The problems are complex and the solutions are complex. No one organization or sector of the society can carry the burden alone.

Children's Services - When Can They Be Met? Let me remind you - The Federal government is a far distance away from the local community. We will continue to provide support to the most critical needs of our nation's children and families. We must have the leadership of the community and the State if we ever expect to have the services necessary for providing an environment for which all children and families can grow and suceed to their ultimate potential!

During the decade of the eighties, we look forward to more coordination and integration of services at the State and local levels. And we see the emergence of new, more effective partnerships between public, private and voluntary organizations. We see renewed commitment at every level to the family as the source of our national strength and our future.

I look forward to working with you for all our children in the years to come.